

IRS Admits Tapping Own Agents' Wires

Associated Press

Internal Revenue Service officials freely admitted yesterday tapping the phones of their own agents and others suspected of crime and conceded that in some cases they might have been "overzealous." Joseph R. Harmon, deputy chief of IRS intelligence, told a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee investigating such practices that he and his superiors knew of and discussed them, "particularly when we got caught."

O. Burke Yung, special IRS intelligence agent who teaches in the Treasury Electronics Devices School, told of various wire taps or listening devices he had installed. He said these were never ordered, but had been "requested" by one branch of the Service or another.

The hearing under Sen. Edward V. Long (D-Mo.) was one in a series. At earlier hearings, IRS agents in Pittsburgh

and Boston and taxpayers have told of the use of electronic devices in obtaining evidence.

Witnesses at yesterday's session were of what Long described as the "elite guard" of IRS, who are assigned to keep a check on the approximately 63,000 IRS employees.

Most of Yung's testimony concerned wire taps or other devices installed by him related to the period prior to 1960 when he was in the inspection service checking on IRS employees. He said, however, that as an intelligence agent he had placed or assisted in placing taps on outsiders.

Long said that the organized crime drive ordered in 1961 by former IRS Commissioner Mortimer Caplan included a directive for full use of electronics. He asked Yung whether he considered this an order to use telephone wire taps.

Yung said he "didn't ask

too many questions" and that he didn't consider wire taps illegal if information obtained was not divulged outside government offices.

Yung said Harmon had never ordered him to place a tap, although requests for aid from other offices, transmitted through Harmon, were honored.

Harmon said he had never authorized wire taps but that he was aware that Yung had, far

the equipment and that he had called upon Yung to help in some cases.

Yung testified that in one investigation an IRS agent's apartment lock had been picked to gain entry and that lock picking was one of the courses in the Treasury school.

Harmon said he knew of the school course and said "that may be going a little far."